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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Division of Biographic Information

The Division of Biographic Information (BI)

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1. What is it?
2. What is its purpose?
3. Where does it get its information?
4. How does it handle the information it obtains?
5. Who benefits from its operations?

1. WHAT IS IT?

-One of three divisions in the Office of Intelligence Resources and Coordination (IRC).

-It maintains the Department of State's central biographic file.

-It specializes in collecting, evaluating, and disseminating biographic information on prominent people in foreign countries throughout the world.

-BI is divided into branches covering geographic areas, with analysts assigned to identify and keep records on the leading personalities in each country.

-It is a "Who's Who" Plus operation. It frequently knows more about a person than what is ordinarily found in "Who's Who" publications; and it knows something about many people who never rate a published "Who's Who" listing.

-BI maintains systematic files on something like a million people, and the files are naturally growing every day.

BUT BI IS ONLY ONE PART of the Government's entire Biographic Intelligence set-up:

-BI assumes responsibility for personalities who fall essentially into the political, cultural, economic, and sociological fields.

-CIA assumes responsibility for scientists and technological personalities.

-The DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE keeps similar biographic files on military personalities.

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State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

2. WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

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2) -BI seeks to be prepared to provide, on short notice, comprehensive, current, and reliable information concerning the background, basic attitudes, and capabilities of foreign nationals who directly or indirectly influence domestic and international policies of their countries, and whose activities are of interest to the Department and other Federal agencies. *members of the intelligence community*

-BI does not interest itself in Americans.

-Among the foreigners in whom BI is particularly interested are:

-The sovereign or head of state, members of his family, and leading executive assistants.

-Cabinet members. The most important officials of ministries or departments (particularly those concerned with foreign affairs, but also Justice, Police, Industry and Commerce, etc.)

-Governors in colonial territories, and their ranking subordinates.

-Chief delegates to important international or regional conferences and representatives with international organizations concerned with political or security affairs, social movements, labor movements, etc.

-Members of officer rank in the diplomatic and consular services.

-Leaders in political parties.

-Presiding officers, heads of committees, and other influential members of legislative bodies.

-Governors, mayors, and other prominent local officials.

-Leading businessmen, educators, newspapermen, writers, artists.

-Leaders in significant national or international fraternal and social organizations.

-Vital statistics and career data are viewed as simply a starting point in the study of a foreign personality.

2) -A more complete and intimate knowledge of leaders is often an indispensable aid in understanding conditions in a country, and in anticipating possible developments.

-Thus, the factors of personality and capacities are matters of much concern.

(Purpose, continued)

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--BI seeks to know as much as possible about such things as:

- A person's influence and reputation;

- Whether he is controlled by others;

- Whether his influence is on the way up or down;

- His views on significant issues: e.g.

- Freedom of enterprise vs nationalization;

- Church schools vs public schools

- Cultural exchanges between the Free World and Red areas

- Economic intercourse between the two political spheres

- Authoritarian vs liberal forms of government, etc.

- His connections with significant movements and developments

- His executive, professional, or technical abilities

- His educational background

- His religious and cultural background

- His knowledge of languages

- His family status

- His extra-professional interests (hobbies, inclinations)

- His vanities, enthusiasms, prejudices, weaknesses, susceptibilities

- His appearance, manners, and mannerisms

- In sum, BI's aim is to be ready at any time to provide U.S. Government agencies and officials with the kind of information on foreign personalities which will facilitate intercourse with them, on an advantageous basis.

3. WHERE DOES IT GET ITS INFORMATION in order to achieve its purpose?

- The U.S. Government was relatively slow in developing a coordinated biographic program.

- Other governments have long had extensive biographic intelligence services.

- Ours was haphazard before 1942.

-BI was created in 1946.

-It took over the files of the Personal Intelligence Section of the Division of Economic Security Controls (State), those of the Office of Strategic Services, those of the Who's Who Branch of G-2 (Army), and those accumulated by other private and governmental collectors during the war years.

-Now the U.S. Government has an effective instrument in the field of biographic intelligence.

-Principal current sources of information:

-Reporting by Foreign Service posts:

-The formal "Biographic Data" report prepared in the field is the regular vehicle used by Foreign Service Officers to tell the Department what they know about significant personalities in their area of assignment.

-Larger posts are staffed with full-time biographic officers who gather information from all local sources available to them, and who report to the Department.

-BI has access to practically all other reports, on various subjects, sent in from Foreign Service establishments throughout the world.

-Analysts in BI screen all such material for fragments of biographic interest.

-When it is realized that over 200 Foreign Service Officers were given End User reports by BI for their work during fiscal year 1957, one gets some indication of the degree of participation of the Foreign Service in the Biographic Program.

-Foreign Service personnel returning to the Department are often debriefed.

-Documents originating with other Government agencies are also screened.

-Principal agencies involved are:

-CIA

-The Defense Department (Army, Air, and Naval Attachés)

-USIA (Public Affairs Officers, Cultural Attachés)

3. WHERE DOES IT GET ITS INFORMATION (continued)

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-Other Sources:

-The Press (foreign and domestic newspapers);
News Agencies (tickers).

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-Foreign broadcasts

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-Publications of numerous kinds:

- "Who's Who" directories

- Collections of published biographies

- Government directories:

- Diplomatic biographic registers

- Diplomatic lists

- Parliamentary directories

- Civil service lists

- Directories put out by International Organizations, and bulletins

- Business, professional directories (doctors, journalists, clergy, e.g.)

- Bulletins of various organizations (e.g. labor, business, cultural, lobby groups)

- And Books. (e.g. on political history, on labor movements)

4. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION gathered from such numerous and varied sources?

- Evaluation of reliability is obviously an extremely important matter.

- The possibility of bias and of distortion of fact always has to be kept in mind and taken into account when an item is selected for the biographic files.

-Processing documents

- Each document reaching BI is screened by specialized analysts for items of biographic intelligence.

- The fragment may be simply an identification of a person as occupying some position at a given time.

- Or, it may be a detail regarding his education, family or political connection.

4. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION (continued)

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- It may be a photograph.
- Also, it may be quite a lengthy exposition of his views on some significant topic.
- Brief fragments are typed on cards and filed in chronological order, approximating as closely as possible the date of the event.
- Longer items are filed in the person's biographic folder, likewise in chronological order.
- As such fragments fall into the files over a period of time, like pieces of a mosaic, the picture of the man automatically grows clearer and clearer.

-Uses made of the files

- As occasions arise, the analyst can supply rather quickly the kind of information needed in a given circumstance by a duly interested official.
- BI attempts to "tailor" its reports strictly to the needs of its customer.
 - The occasion may call simply for a brief unclassified sketch given over the phone to an officer who is to meet the foreigner at lunch.
 - Or, the need may require a full, and frequently highly classified, written report on the personalities of a new government, or on an international adventurer.
 - Briefing papers are often prepared for U.S. officials before their trips into foreign areas, on personalities they are likely to meet.
 - E.g. Vice President Nixon's trip to Africa
Under Secretary Herter's trip to Malaya
 - Similarly, biographies are prepared on foreign delegations to important international meetings, for use by members of the U.S. delegations.
 - E.g. The UN General Assembly;
North Atlantic Council meetings;
SEATO conferences

4. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION (continued)

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-Forms employed in reports vary according to the purpose for which they are written:

-Ad hoc reports

-These are usually typed in a small number of copies, destined for a specific customer.

-Reports of broader interest are put out in mimeographed form and receive a more or less wide distribution.

-The Biographic Brief is such a document prepared within a few hours after a foreign personality assumes a highly significant position or posture.

-E.g. a new prime minister

-The Biographic Report is fuller treatment of either a single personality, or of a group of individuals in a single context.

-E.g. A government, or a delegation

-Published reports issued in printed form, as opposed to mimeographed form

-The Biographic Directory is a listing by name and position of governmental and party organizations of Soviet bloc countries.

E.g. The directory, Soviet Political Leaders which listed over 8,000 names with position titles.

-JIS Contributions

-Sections 59

-Biographic studies of the key personalities in political, economic, sociological, and cultural fields in a given country.

-Key Personalities (KP's)

-Biographic studies of the key personalities in all fields of endeavor in a given country. These biographies represent a cooperative effort and are prepared by Army, Navy, Air Force, CIA, and State, each agency contributing reports on persons in its area of responsibility.

-Supplements VI

-Studies in depth of Communism in any given country in the Free World. Included are biographies of Communist leaders and others who are active in promoting the Communist cause.

-International Communism (108)

-Studies of Communist front organizations including biographies of the leaders of such organizations.

5. WHO BENEFITS FROM BI's operations?

-BI is essentially a service organization, with quite an extensive clientele

-It provides biographic information on some 3,000 individuals a month to many offices in the Department and in other Government agencies.

-Some of the principal users of BI material are:

-In the Department:

- Country political desks (and their principals)
- Research desks
- The Visa Office
- The Historical Division
- The Bureau of International Organizations
- The Bureau of Economic Affairs
- The International Education Exchange Service (IEES)
- Foreign Service posts (including USUN)

-Other Agencies of the Government:

- CIA } Participating with BI in the Govern-
- Defense Department } ment's total biographic program
- ICA (International Cooperation Administration)
- Treasury Department
- USIA (U.S. Information Agency)
- OCB (Operations Coordinating Board)
- Justice Department (FBI)
- Congress

From time to time, BI receives requests for information from practically every executive department.